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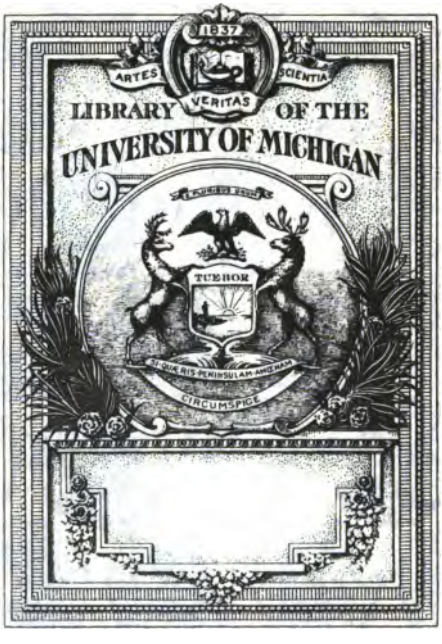

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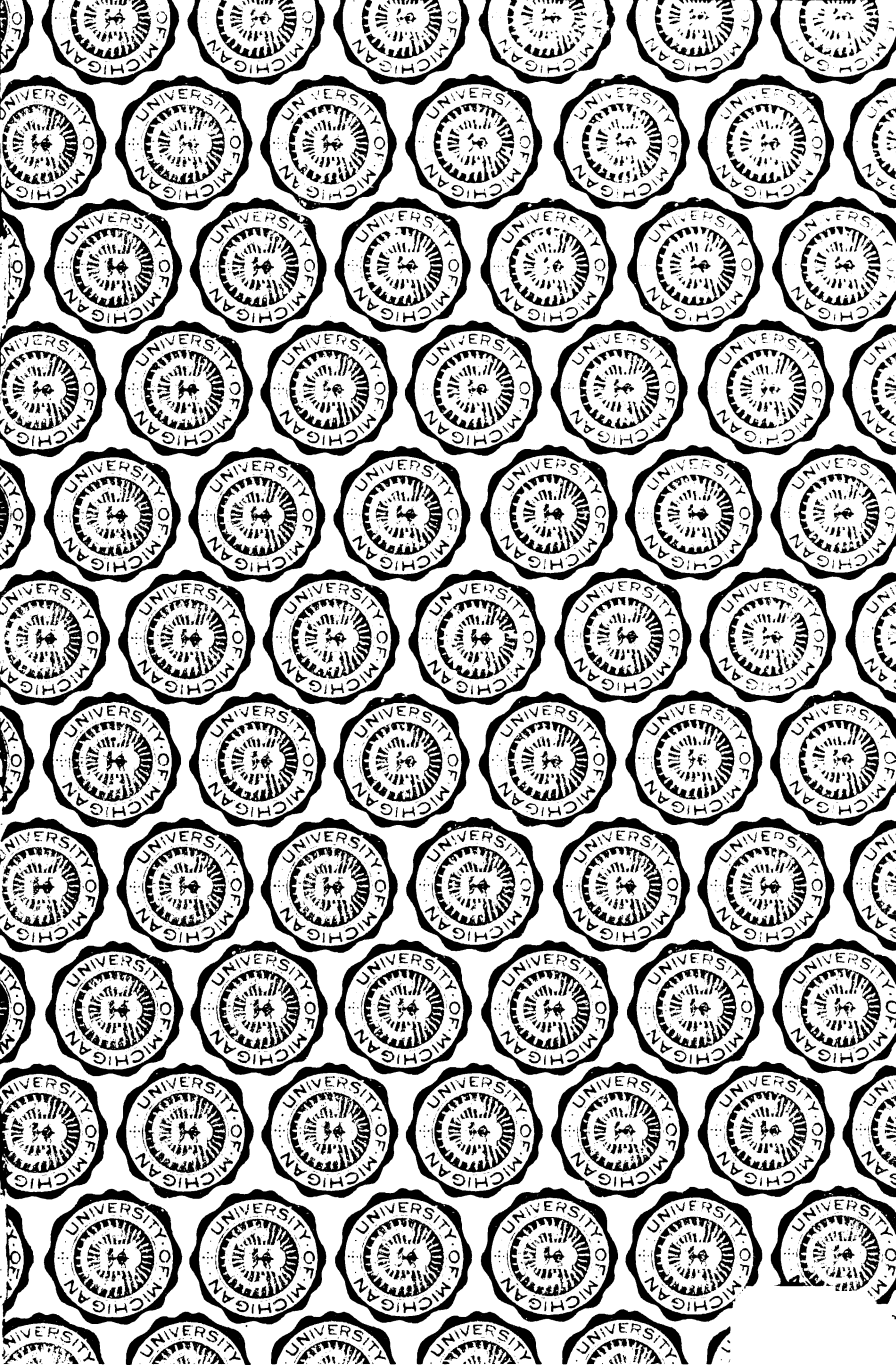
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Masks and Men: a Play in One Act: by Sarah Humason

In the Vassar Series of Plays
Edited by Gertrude Buck

Samuel French: Publisher
28-30 West Thirty-eighth St. : New York

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Every play in this series has been written by a member of the Play-Writing Class at Vassar College. But each play as printed is the product of a group-activity. Not merely an individual seated at a desk, but a community working together in a theater, is responsible for it in its final form.

Some of these plays have been "tried out" by the Vassar Dramatic Workshop and some by the Community Theatre of Poughkeepsie, New York. By the coöperative efforts of all who were associated in these enterprises—actors, committee workers and financial supporters—these plays have been given a sympathetic and intelligent production before audiences also intelligent and sympathetic, whose reaction has afforded the writers much valuable criticism. In the preliminary readings and rehearsals, also, occasional weak points which had escaped the ordeal of class criticism came to light and were strengthened by the author's revision. In fact, the plays as they appear in this series are literally a collaboration of the writers with innumerable friendly critics in the play-writing class, the cast and the audience. And it would be ungracious to put the fruits of this collaboration at the service of the public without grateful acknowledgment to all those who have in any way helped to establish and carry on the Vassar Dramatic Workshop or the Community Theatre of Poughkeepsie.

In recent years there has been an increasing de-

mand for well-written, dramatically effective one-act plays, suitable for production by semi-professional companies or by amateur organizations of serious purpose and some degree of training. To aid in supplying this demand is the purpose of the Vassar Series of Plays. Other plays written by members of the Play-Writing Class at Vassar College may be secured in typewritten form by application to The Workshop Bureau of Plays, Vassar College.

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MASKS AND MEN

PRODUCING THE PLAY

"Masks and Men" is a romantic make-believe which no one is expected to take very seriously, but which everyone enjoys thinking might have happened "once upon a time." The setting and costumes of 17th century England need not be precisely copied from the books, but should be followed closely enough to give a general impression of the period. The heavy, dark oaken door, tables and settle make an effective background for the vari-colored costumes of Beatrice and the men. Roland, as the typical fop, should be especially gay in his dress. Careful study of grouping and color-values will present to the audience at successive moments in the play a series of charming old English pictures.

"Masks and Men" should be played with dash and gayety. Beatrice is troubled for a time about Jerry's safety, and Jerry is thoughtful, even wistful, as he speaks of the little house in which he would live quietly hereafter with Beatrice. These, however, are only passing moods, to be emphasized by somewhat slower speech and action, as well as by tones of genuine feeling, but not allowed to carry their qualities over into the lighter scenes. Everywhere else in the play the movement must be rapid and easy, the cues quickly taken up and the "business" so practised that the audience has no time to question whether this or that would, after all, have happened in real life. This effect of whirlwind adventure is especially necessary from the entrance of the soldiers

to the final speech of the wounded man. The success of the play, in fact, depends largely upon the breathless rush of speeches and action here. The last two speeches, however, should give the audience a chance to relax the tension before the curtain goes down.

Blount and Tim, though minor parts, give excellent opportunities for skilled acting. Tim's slow-witted confusions of speech may be made hilariously funny. Blount's boisterous good spirits and jovial laugh should be contagious with the audience. Roland has to be played with somewhat more restraint, as an effect of broad caricature tends to overweight the humorous aspects of the play. A good sense of "team-work" as well as clever acting is needed to let this part be as funny as it can be without sacrificing the romantic effects which the play as a whole should produce.

The charming vivacity of Beatrice and her clever baiting of Roland afford a delightful contrast to her anxious solicitude for Jerry. Jerry, as the ideal romantic hero, must be able to shift easily from tender love-making to dare-devil exploits, from clever speeches with double meanings to masterful seizing of the thing he wants. He must dominate every scene by his presence and manner. The audience must not only want him to succeed, but be sure he will do so.

This does not mean that there is no tension in the play. There is the tension of romantic adventure, though not the high emotional climax which a realistic drama may offer. The chief concern of director and actors is, therefore, to heighten by every possible means the play's characteristic qualities of pictorial beauty and brilliant daring. To this end, all hitches and drags must be eliminated from the performance and a light-footed, swift, joyous movement secured. This means not only careful planning but

many long rehearsals, until the means for producing this effect are completely in hand. But the result will be a charming play in which the actors are so completely at home that they enjoy it almost as much as the audience does.

GERTRUDE BUCK.

CHARACTERS

JOHN BLOUNT ..... *An Innkeeper*
BEATRICE ..... *His daughter*
ROLAND HARRINGTON
Son of the neighborhood squire
JERRY ABERTHWAITE ..... *A highwayman*
TIM ..... *A stable boy*
FOUR REDCOATS ..... *Officers of the king*

First produced by the Community Theatre of Poughkeepsie, New York, Feb. 4, 5, 11 and 12, 1921.

MASKS AND MEN

SCENE: *An English inn of the 17th century. Two rough tables. A fireplace at left with a settle before it. Doors at left and right. Heavy oaken outside door at center back, kept secure by a cross-bar.*

Shelves along the wall holding mugs and plates. A few chairs. Window to the right of the door.

Candle-light.

TIME: *A November evening.*

*(*BEATRICE *is tidying up the room. She occasionally goes over and looks out of the window, anxiously. She finally sees what she is looking for and going to the door, opens it. Enter* JERRY. *He is a handsome youth of twenty-five. His clothes are rich and fashionable, but dusty with travel.)*

BEATRICE. Ah, Jerry—Jerry.

JERRY. *(Kissing her)* Bea, all day I've ridden just for this—and this, I think.

BEATRICE. You're safe, then—safe.

JERRY. Safe enough—for the present. Never for long. Who's about?

BEATRICE. No one. Father's gone up the road to the Red Cock for a talk. The stable-boy's here, but he's usually asleep.

JERRY. The stable-boy? Are there horses?

BEATRICE. Only one. A fat, gray mare.

JERRY. H'm. I may need her later. But I can't stay. There's business to be done.

BEATRICE. Oh, Jerry, more robbery? I beg of you—for my sake——

JERRY. No, not a hold-up, this time. I've had enough for the day. The Islington coach—*(He laughs)*—my faith, and a pretty piece of work it was, too.

BEATRICE. Oh! *(She shudders slightly and turns from him.)*

JERRY. Why do you frown? At the thought of a hold-up? Come, Bea—*(He takes her hand)*—you know there's no harm done. I've never robbed a poor man yet, nor shot an honest one.

BEATRICE. Oh, I know—but it can't be right.

JERRY. Right? Who are we to judge? Who made the laws—not I, nor you. As for the fat merchants and powdered fops in the buses, they have but to get back to town to fill their pockets up again with gold, and I have a little more added to the store I'm putting by—for us.

BEATRICE. For us?

JERRY. Aye—I'm coming by here one fine day in the guise of a respectable gentleman and then we'll ask your father's blessing.

BEATRICE. 'Twould not be had for the asking, I fancy.

JERRY. Why not? 'Twould be a bit sudden, perhaps, as he knows nothing of my existence. But he need never know anything of my past and my future will look promising.

BEATRICE. He wants me to marry Roland Harrington, the squire's son.

JERRY. *(Teases)* And you——

BEATRICE. Oh, I despise him for a weakling and a fool.

JERRY. And me for an adventurer and a thief.

BEATRICE. Oh, no. I love the adventurer, and as for the other—oh, well, I love *you,* whatever I may wish to think.

JERRY. *(Suddenly)* Gad, I'd nearly forgotten. Bea, I must go. Has your father a gun about the place?

BEATRICE. What are you going to do?

JERRY. Don't fear, it's only my horse. Poor lad. He's done me good service, too. They pressed me hard, and a sudden shot frightened him so he missed his jump. Landed in a ditch and broke his leg. I couldn't stop then, it was a bit hot. But I must go back now and kill him, poor old Roany.

BEATRICE. Isn't it still dangerous?

JERRY. Perhaps, but I can't leave a good friend in the ditch with a broken leg. Has your father a gun?

BEATRICE. No, or if he has, I don't know where. He's more afraid of guns than thieves, he says.

JERRY. Ah, that's bad. I've only one shot left, and I'd rather not meet my scarlet-coated friends yonder with empty hands. However, Roany needs it more than I do, I fancy. Good-by, Bea. I'll be back when the work's done unless they run me into a hole.

BEATRICE. I'm frightened.

JERRY. Why not? What would life be without a bit of danger, now and again? But don't be afraid. We'll meet again in half an hour or less. Wish me luck, and the use of my wits, and I'll brave all England back to you again. *(Exit.)*

(Enter BLOUNT, *the landlord. He is robust and jolly, though he tries to be gruff.)*

BEATRICE. Father, did you meet anyone?

BLOUNT. Meet anyone? Not a soul. There's naught but fog on the road. Why?

BEATRICE. I thought I heard steps.

BLOUNT. They didn't pass my way. I've been up at the Red Cock—such a time, ho-ho. We tied old Joe the landlord up to his own door wi' a bit o' rope an' had a round of his best ale. Ho-ho.

BEATRICE. Father, will you never grow up? You and your endless jokes.

BLOUNT. Why not? What would life be without a bit o' jesting now and then? Well, Bea—young Roland been in to-day?

BEATRICE. No, Father.

BLOUNT. It's you as is keeping him off. *(A pause)* Is it you as is keeping him off?

BEATRICE. *(Bending over the fire)* I wonder.

BLOUNT. To my way of thinkin', all this comes o' your goin' up to Lunnon to be a ladies' maid, and gettin' learnin' an' such nonsense.

BEATRICE. All what?

BLOUNT. Why, you an' your foolishness. Wot with comin' back an' actin' like you was better 'n your rightful betters. Here you go actin' the fool wi' young Roland, wot's the squire's son an' the best blood in the county, an' money an' servants an' all, an' a fine young gallant, too.

BEATRICE. Oh, Father, don't. I've told you before that Roland really cares far more for the powder on his hair, and the buckles on his shoes, than he does for me. *(A pause.)* Roland. Bah. If anyone pointed a pistol at *him,* he'd run till he dropped or died of fright.

BLOUNT. Wot are you talkin' about now? Who'd want to point a pistol at him? Wot put that into your head?

BEATRICE. Oh, nothing. I'm only trying to explain. Father, do let me alone. I'm sick of him, and talk of him. If he'd stay away for a bit, I might be able to forget him.

(Enter TIM, *a stable boy.)*

TIM. Miss Beatrice, could you get a cove a bit of ale? Thank ye. *(Sits down)* Been havin' a time wi' the gray mare. Lame as a blind duck, she is, in the left forefoot. Nasty business. Wanted to ride over to Shraftsbury to-morrow. No go. Blind as a lame duck—I mean lame as a blind—well, ne'er mind.

BLOUNT. Tim, we ought to have another horse about. Wait till they swing the coach route this way. We'll get one then.

TIM. Young Willie Straymore is layin', waitin' for you. Angry he is. Like a fightin' cock.

BLOUNT. And why?

TIM. Humph. Says you spoiled his best suit o' clothes and his love-makin' throwin' water on him out the window.

(Exit BEATRICE. *The two men chuckle. When* BLOUNT *laughs he shakes all over silently.)*

BLOUNT. Aye. Young Willie was gettin' a bit too cocky. When a man gets cocky, take him down —that's what I says.

TIM. Your ears is always open to see a joke.

BLOUNT. I like a bit o' fun, now an' then. Tim, have you seen young Roland Harrington comin' in here now an' again?

TIM. Not bein' deaf and dumb, I have.

BLOUNT. There's another lad as is too cocky. An' my Beatrice is another. Wants to marry my Beatrice, young Roland does.

TIM. Wants to—juggins. What for?

BLOUNT. What for? Why shouldn't a man want to marry my girl?

TIM. Hold on. I only meant—juggins. Roland Harrington. You'll be leavin' here soon, then. I wunner if you could get me on as a groom up at the squire's.

BLOUNT. Not so fast. They ain't married yet—not half.

TIM. Why not?

BLOUNT. Beatrice won't.

TIM. Won't what?

BLOUNT. Marry young Roland.

TIM. Won't marry—juggins. Humph. Womenfolks. Takes the wisdom of Job an' the patience of Solomon to deal wi' them.

BLOUNT. Aye. But, Tim, I've thought o' a plan. *(Laughs)* Beatrice is goin' to marry that lad, an' I'm goin' to see to it, an' a good joke on 'em both.

TIM. What you goin'——

(Enter ROLAND. *He is dressed in the height of fashion, a true fop. He delivers all his speeches, most of which he has learned beforehand, with an exaggerated dramatic air, meant to be impressive. Exit* TIM.*)*

ROLAND. Miss Beatrice?

BLOUNT. I'll fetch her, sir. *(Going to the door)* Beatrice—here's a gentleman to see you.

(Enter BEATRICE.*)*

ROLAND. *(In an Englishman's French)* Bone swar, Mademoiselle Beatrice.

BEATRICE. Good evening.

ROLAND. *(Bowing low, first to* BEATRICE, *then to her father)* My respects to both of you.

BLOUNT. One thing I've allers remembered an' that is never to stay where I'm not wanted an' whoever remembers that can't never come to no harm. So I'll be leavin' you two to yourselves. *(Bowing to* ROLAND, *he retires.)*

BEATRICE. Would you care for some ale, sir?

ROLAND. No, I thank you. I came here this evening for another purpose than that of imbibing

refreshments. I—ah, mademoiselle, you would not be cruel and keep me in suspense?

BEATRICE. What now?

ROLAND. Ah, Beatrice, you know, you know that subject which lies nearest to this poor heart of mine. I have told you before what anguish, what burnings, what——

BEATRICE. You have told me before, sir, many times before.

ROLAND. And you have no answer ready yet, which may ease my suffering?

BEATRICE. Indeed, sir, 'twas only last evening that I gave you an answer.

ROLAND. Ah, but not the answer which I sought —and the fair sex is famous, among other things, for its swift change of heart. Do you remember what I said to you last night?

BEATRICE. You swore to me eternal loyalty and swore—ah, grandly swore—that you would obey my lightest word whilst yet your foot trod this, our earth. Did you not?

ROLAND. Ah, Beatrice, yes. You repeat my very words. Have they then left such a mark upon your heart that you can quote them whole?

BEATRICE. *(Laughing)* You forget, sir, I have heard them many times.

ROLAND. Will you listen once more while I, poor fellow that I am, endeavor to tell you something of the hopes which thrill my soul? *(He waits.* BEATRICE *settles herself comfortably and takes up some sewing.)*

BEATRICE. I'm listening.

*(*ROLAND *strikes a ridiculously dramatic attitude before the fire and begins.)*

ROLAND. Once, hidden in a sheltered spot was a flower—a——

BEATRICE. A violet, perchance?

ROLAND. *(Completely serious)* Precisely so. A violet. I, one day, chanced upon it, as I strode along, unwitting that anywhere such beauty grew. But when I saw it—ah, it pierced my heart, it—it thrilled my soul, it—it shook the foundations of my being.

BEATRICE. Ah, it shook the foundations of your being. That's new, I think.

ROLAND. *(Irritated at being interrupted)* I do not understand you, madam.

BEATRICE. The foundations of your being—are they not new? I do not remember hearing of them before.

ROLAND. Am I forced to think that you are making sport of me?

BEATRICE. But no—ah, surely not. How could I but feel touched at what you do for me? The labor, the perseverance of learning them—these speeches—which when spoken thus nobly, while away weary hours for a lonely girl.

ROLAND. But, indeed, I beg of you. I have learned nothing. They come from my heart, these words.

BEATRICE. And from your soul?

ROLAND. And from my soul.

BEATRICE. Roland, do I ever reach your soul?

ROLAND. *(Quickly)* You thrill my soul.

BEATRICE. *(Beckoning him to her)* I thought so. A word. When next your heart has messages to send, tell it not to say I thrill your soul. I do not like the phrase. I'm tired of it.

ROLAND. The phrase is awkward and perhaps too often used. It shall be struck out. William shall find a new one this very night.

BEATRICE. Struck out from where? And what has your valet to do with the dictates of your heart?

ROLAND. *(Embarrassed)* I beg of you——

BEATRICE. *(Rising and mimicking his manner)* And who am I, think you, to be won by fine phrases

written by a valet and conned by his master? You hurt my pride, you injure my dignity, you force my very being to cry Stop. *(She suddenly laughs and ceases to act)* Ah, Roland, Roland, let be. Can't you see that I'm only a light-headed innkeeper's daughter, not understanding such a one as you? Let be. Go and find another listener. There's no hope here. And my patience is completely at an end.

(She goes, turning at the door to make him a mock curtsey and blow him a teasing kiss. ROLAND, *alone, walks up and down, meditating.)*

ROLAND. Blount, Blount, I say—landlord.

*(*BLOUNT *enters so promptly that it is apparent that he has been listening just outside the door.)*

BLOUNT. Yes, sir.

ROLAND. I want to talk to you.

BLOUNT. Yes, sir.

ROLAND. Now, your daughter, sir, is to be the subject of our discourse.

BLOUNT. Yes, sir, my daughter, Beatrice, you mean.

ROLAND. Have you other daughters?

BLOUNT. Hoh, no, sir, just the one. I just wanted to be sure, sir, as the beginning of this here discourse were all smooth and nateral.

ROLAND. Your daughter, I regret to say, my man, has refused to marry me.

BLOUNT. Refused to marry you? My daughter? Strike me pink, sir, I never would a believed that.

ROLAND. It is, nevertheless, the sad truth.

BLOUNT. Well, sir, if you say it's the truth, the truth it is, and it's not for me to argify. The truth it is, sir, and sad it is, too.

ROLAND. Ah, well, the world was ever cruel to the virtuous. I suppose I'd best be on my way.

BLOUNT. Hold on a minute, young sir.

ROLAND. *(Pausing in surprise)* Well?

BLOUNT. Well, sir, I've been thinkin' this here over a bit. I'm one as allers likes to help another along—help others an' you'll help yourself, that's wot I allers remembers.

ROLAND. Yes, yes, but come to the point.

BLOUNT. Yes, sir, we're comin' to that, right now. Beatrice, she's a queer one. Strike me blind if I ever see her like. Well, she gets a notion—all comes from livin' up Lunnon way an' gettin' learnin' an' what-not, to my way o' thinkin'—well, she gets a notion, Beatrice does, that the kind of a man wot she'd like would be one wot you might call an adventurer, one wot plays wi' pistols an' things, nateral like.

ROLAND. Yes, yes, but I'm not an adventurer, and I don't like pistols and things.

BLOUNT. No, sir, you ain't and you doesn't, and quite right you are, too. But, well, you've heard tell of this Jerry Aberthwaite wot's been robbin' coaches for the last two year?

ROLAND. Heard of him! He's telling the time by a watch of mine, now. May he hang for it!

BLOUNT. Quite so, sir. Well, your honor, this here Jerry has never been catched as yet, bein' a smart lad an' tricky wi' a horse an' there's nobody as can say who he is, or where he hails from. Am I right, sir?

ROLAND. You are right.

BLOUNT. Well, sir, there do be those as say this young Jerry is some lad o' this neighborhood or somew'eres near-by under his mask.

ROLAND. I don't believe it. Were he of this vicinity, I should have tracked him home before this.

BLOUNT. I dare say you're right, sir. But no-

body ever saw his face. And there do be those as believe he lives here-abouts. Beatrice might believe it, too.

ROLAND. Well, what of that?

BLOUNT. Ah, sir, that's my p'int, sir. If you was to tell her, now, that you was Jerry—act up like, an' maybe perduce a mask or a brace o' pistols—an' then while she was won by yer as an adventurer, you was to perceed to marry her—well, there ye are. Then you can tell her as how you're not Jerry at all, but bein' as you're all married right an' proper—which ain't as easy out of as into, as you might say——

ROLAND. Jove! *(Rising, he grasps the landlord by the hand)* My friend, you have saved the day, and done Roland Harrington a great service. He is not one to forget such. My gratitude is yours. When next I come I shall both see and conquer. *(Exit.)*

*(*BLOUNT *indulges in silent laughter.)*

BLOUNT. *(Calls)* Beatrice—he's gone.

(Enter BEATRICE.*)*

BEATRICE. At last.

BLOUNT. Aye. Beatrice, did you ever think as how young Roland might be somepin' more than he appears?

BEATRICE. No, I never did.

BLOUNT. Well, I have. You've heard of this Jerry Aberthwaite?

BEATRICE. *(Looking up quickly)* What has he to do with Roland?

BLOUNT. Well, who can say? Maybe some, maybe less. There do be those as thinks as he's someone of the neighborhood. An' the squire's undergroom told Tim, as how Roland comes in

sometimes at daybreak wi' his horse all muddy an' nigh dead.

BEATRICE. *(Calmly)* Indeed?

BLOUNT. Well, I'm not wishin' to cast any false light on the young master, but I'm thinkin', that's all.

BEATRICE. Amuse yourself with these wonder-tales if you like. I have better things to think of.

(Enter TIM.*)*

TIM. 'Nother hold-up.

BLOUNT. Wot—near-by?

TIM. Islington way.

BLOUNT. Here, sit down and tell us. Beatrice, some ale.

(They seat themselves. BEATRICE *serves them and listens carefully.)*

BLOUNT. Wot now?

TIM. Coach. Jerry.

BLOUNT. Jerry again?

TIM. Aye.

BLOUNT. But—'twas only two days gone that 'twas the Ipswich coach. He travels fast.

TIM. Aye. Good horses an' a good rider.

BLOUNT. *(With a glance at* BEATRICE*)* Ah, young Roland were not around to-day. Not till to-night, were he?

TIM. Not here. I saw him—— *(*BLOUNT *reaches over and kicks him.* TIM *stares in amazement. He starts to speak again, but is again checked by* BLOUNT.*)*

BLOUNT. There do be those, Tim, as think young Roland and Jerry——

TIM. Young Roland and Jerry—well, wot?

BLOUNT. That they're the same.

TIM. Wot? I never heerd, ah-um. *(He is again checked by* BLOUNT *and subsides.)*

BLOUNT. Where'll Jerry be next, I wonder?

TIM. Who knows? Here now, there then—like winkin'.

BLOUNT. Why don't they do somethin'? Standin' by an' watchin' rightful citizens robbed.

TIM. They's doin' somepin' now.

BLOUNT. Wot?

TIM. King's men.

BLOUNT. Ah, they've come up at last, have they?

TIM. Aye, from Lunnon. Best riders in all Englan'. Never catch him.

BLOUNT. Well, they might, who knows? He can't keep a goin' an' a goin' forever.

TIM. He can. He walks into a inn as bold as brass, an' Ale, says he, an' they gives him ale. A horse, says he, an' they gives him a horse an' he's off to the next county—like winkin'. An' they do say (there's a pal o' mine in a tavern on the Shraftsbury road, wot seen him), as how his eyes shoot fire.

BLOUNT. His pistols shoot fire, which is more to the p'int. Whoever he is, there's a cove for you, Beatrice, there's a lad wot ain't afraid o' pistols. Eh? *(*BEATRICE *is looking out of the window and does not reply)* I say there's one as don't turn from adventure? An' he's a brave one, I say. Wot do you say?

BEATRICE. A brave one—aye, braver than most.

TIM. *(Rising)* Brave he may be, but I wants no doin's with them as shoots fire wi' their eyes. I best be gettin' back to my stables.

(Knock at the door. TIM *opens it. Enter* JERRY. *He sits down at table.)*

JERRY. Ale, my man, and look alive. I'm thirsty.

*(*TIM *comes nearer and gazes fascinatedly at the*

stranger's eyes until the latter looks up. TIM *retires in confusion.)*

BLOUNT. *(Bustling)* Aye—you'll have the best, sir?

JERRY. Don't be foolish, fellow. What else would I have?

BLOUNT. Aye, sir—at once.

*(*BEATRICE *brings the ale and serves the stranger. Their eyes meet meaningly, and their hands touch.* TIM *gets as far as the door and turns to stare again.)*

JERRY. *(Turning to look at him)* One moment. Is there a fresh horse in your stables?

TIM. *(Spellbound)* A——

JERRY. Well?

TIM. A horse, did you say?

JERRY. Such was my word. Have you a quadruped which could without undue exertion carry me on its back to the next town?

TIM. You wants a horse? Yes, sir—I mean no, sir—there ain't no horse here. Except one.

JERRY. Thank you. One will be sufficient.

TIM. She's gone lame.

JERRY. An interesting statement, arrived at with some considerable effort on your part. I shall, then, perforce, spend the night.

TIM. *(Sighs and goes, muttering)* A horse, says he. Juggins. *(Exit.)*

BLOUNT. Sorry as we can't offer you a horse, sir. We've a poor sort o' place here, for them as travels. Not many strangers do we have, this time o' year.

JERRY. *(Yawning)* No? Well, no matter. I'm in no hurry. Give me a bed and I'll ask no more.

BLOUNT. A bed you shall have, sir, the best. Did you come on foot, young sir?

JERRY. Only a short way. My horse met with an accident.

BLOUNT. Goin' far, sir?

JERRY. Only into Dedham. I've kinsfolk there. They expected me to-night, but—well, what's their loss is my gain. I have no vast affection for them. You know them, perhaps? French, their name is, like my own.

BLOUNT. French—no, sir, can't say as I do. But I'm not one as moves about much. Your name's French, you say?

JERRY. Geoffrey French—*(Bowing to* BEATRICE*)* —at your service, Mademoiselle.

BLOUNT. Did you hear of this latest robbery?

JERRY. Indeed, yes. I was in the thick of it.

BLOUNT. Indeed, sir? Was you robbed?

JERRY. Not quite, but a close thing. I came by just after the thing happened, and turning to escape over a hedge, my horse fell. A sorry affair. And to think the fellow escaped again.

BLOUNT. Aye—a rascal as ever was. But he'll die hangin' soon, as is only right and just. *(*JERRY *feels gingerly of his throat and makes a grimace)* Have you ever seen him, sir?

JERRY. Well, I've had glimpses of him as you might say. I've never met him face to face. A rascal, indeed. I've no desire to have his pistols turned on me.

(Enter TIM, *excited.)*

TIM. There's doin's at the Red Cock up the road. The King's men do be there. Dick, the stable-boy, was just by an' told me. They've got Jerry cornered in there, an' soon they're goin' to ferret him

out. An' I'm goin' to be there to see. Ah, it's time. There'll be a hangin' soon. *(Exit.)*

(Again JERRY'S *fingers pull at his collar.* BLOUNT *seats himself more comfortably in his chair.* JERRY *and* BEATRICE *look at each other helplessly.)*

JERRY. Jove. I wonder—I have a sudden recollection—I think my cousins mentioned a wedding. One of their number. There are so many—I can't keep count. They did, though. My word. They're most unpleasant when aroused. Look here, my man, are you certain, are you sure that that horse is too lame to carry me?

BLOUNT. Well, sir, Tim says——

JERRY. Don't you look after your own horses?

BLOUNT. Why, no, sir—I——

JERRY. You should.

BLOUNT. I'll step out and look the matter over, sir.

JERRY. Do.

(Exit BLOUNT. BEATRICE *watches from the window until he is safely away, then comes over to* JERRY *and embraces him.)*

BEATRICE. *(Suddenly pushing him away)* But you must go—go—— They'll find out soon. They'll come here. Why don't you go?

JERRY. *(Shrugging his shoulders)* Go where? Go how? My horse is dead, and the fools can ride, at least. No. I stay—for a little. Let me love you for that little. The time is almost up.

BEATRICE. What time?

JERRY. All time for me. Unless my luck turns again. There's always that chance—it has before. But—there'll be a fight, either way.

BEATRICE. Oh, they talk of hanging you, and I——

JERRY. *(Laughing)* Don't worry. They won't do that. A bullet's a bullet—but a rope's end—no—undignified, besides being deuced uncomfortable. *(Sitting down)* Come here, Bea—and let me tell you again how I love you, and how, if I should shake off these fellows, and have a bit more to live, I'm coming back and get you, and you'll marry me—will you marry me?

BEATRICE. You know I'd marry you to-night—if there were only a way.

JERRY. Ah, if there were. We'd settle down, you and I. I know the place. It's a little town. A cliff above the sea, with all the world below. And a little house—'twould not be bad, I think, to rest a bit. I've had enough of robbing. And I have—thanks to fortune and my own wits—enough gold to keep us some years longer than Death would ever allow.

BEATRICE. Ah, Jerry, you would tire of me, soon, and want your wild life back and it would kill me to be always waiting, waiting, with you in danger.

JERRY. I wouldn't want it back. I've had enough. It's fun for a bit. But it's endless, and there are times when the rope's end gets uncomfortably probable. They've been after me again—now. Gad, I thought they had me once. I don't like foot-work, and no bullets. My last sent old Roany home. The shot brought them swarming like hornets.

BEATRICE. How did you——

JERRY. Thought faster than they could ride—that's all. Led them into the Red Cock and jumped out of an upper window into a hay-mow. They're hunting still, I fancy. But I couldn't get far on foot—besides I promised you I'd be back here in half an hour, and here I am in less. But I swore as I landed in that hay-mow that 'twas enough. If I

ever get away—really away—I'll stay away, and you may take my word for that.

BEATRICE. Jerry—is there no way?

JERRY. God, if I had a horse. There are a dozen paths away that they don't know of. Ah, well—let's enjoy this minute and as for the future—— *(A man's voice is heard outside singing)* Is that your father?

BEATRICE. No, that's not his voice.

*(*JERRY *goes over into the left corner, farthest from the door, and watches, picking up a chair.)*

JERRY. Stand away from the door, Bea. I won't have you in this.

BEATRICE. No, no. If you're going to be killed——

(She rushes to the door and flings it open. The other person falls awkwardly into the room. It is ROLAND, *masked, but otherwise unchanged in appearance save for two pistols stuck in his belt. He pulls these out and handles them awkwardly. He does not see* JERRY, *who stands in the corner, awaiting developments.)*

ROLAND. Have no fear, Mademoiselle. I will not harm you.

BEATRICE. *(Completely astounded)* But who—what——

ROLAND. Ah, my ferocious aspect terrorizes you, perhaps. Do not let it. *(He bends over her)* Look in my eyes. Have you ever seen me before?

BEATRICE. But Roland—what——

ROLAND. Ah, you do then recognize me, even beneath this disguise. The eyes of love see far. Beatrice, I must confess to you, I am not only Roland Harrington, the youth you know. I have another

side which I have never dared reveal to you before, a side which loves dark nights and windy roads and the ring of battle, a bloodthirsty side, a side which you have never dreamed of, Beatrice. Adventure thrills my soul. Beatrice, I—I am Jerry Aberthwaite. *(*JERRY *puts the chair down and steps forward.* ROLAND *starting)* I was not aware that a third heard my confession. I must throw myself, sir, upon your mercy.

BEATRICE. He will tell nothing. He is a stranger here, but, I am sure, a trustworthy one.

JERRY. *(Bowing low)* You are right. The secret of Jerry Aberthwaite's identity will die with me. *(Coming forward)* This is an unexpected honor. I had never thought to meet the famous Jerry thus. I have long been an admirer of yours, sir, your skill and bravery and cunning are quite unequaled in all England.

ROLAND. I thank you.

JERRY. *(Picking up* ROLAND'S *pistols which he has left on the table)* Are these the weapons with which you cow the weak?

ROLAND. Those are my weapons.

JERRY. *(Examining them)* Interesting—very. I am glad to have them in my hand. But—Miss Beatrice—why do you turn pale?

(At these words ROLAND *swings around to look at* BEATRICE. JERRY *calmly slips the pistols under his coat.)*

BEATRICE. I—it is nothing.

(She signals to JERRY *that she wants to be alone with* ROLAND.*)*

JERRY. I think, if you will pardon me, I'll go to bed. I should like to stay and listen to tales of

your adventure on the highroad, sir—they would interest me, I'm sure—but though the spirit is willing—— *(He yawns)* Besides, I feel that you and your fair comrade might be content to be alone. Good-night to you.

*(*BEATRICE *goes over and lights a candle, which she gives him. She walks to the door with him to point the way to his room.)*

BEATRICE. Up those stairs, sir, and that door on the right. *(In a lower tone)* Stay near.

JERRY. *(Turning in the doorway and bowing)* The famous Jerry has my heart-felt wishes for all good fortune this world may provide. *(Exit.)*

ROLAND. An admirable fellow.

BEATRICE. Do you think so? Well enough. Ah, Roland, tell me more.

ROLAND. I would not frighten your little head with tales of bloodshed. But I felt I could hide it from you no longer. Tell me—you do not shrink from talking with a rough highwayman?

BEATRICE. *(Going to him)* Roland—Jerry—your story—the thought of what you are—it thrills my soul.

ROLAND. Has my rough side won you when my gentler could not? Truly a thing difficult to understand—the heart of woman.

BEATRICE. *(Clinging to him)* Roland—Jerry—stay and talk to me. Don't go—don't go.

ROLAND. Indeed, dearest, I have no thought of going.

(Enter BLOUNT. *He stops in amazement at the sight of* ROLAND, *then advances.)*

BLOUNT. What's all this?

BEATRICE. Father, it's Roland-Jerry. Father, Roland is Jerry.

BLOUNT. Strike me blind, now who'd have thought that? You are Jerry, sir?

ROLAND. Indeed, sir—I—well,——

(There is a rumble of hoofs outside.)

ROLAND. What's that?

BEATRICE. I thought the famous Jerry was never afraid.

ROLAND. Afraid? Certainly not. What is there to fear?

(Three REDCOATS *burst open the door.)*

THE LEADER. *(Seeing* ROLAND*)* Ah.

THE SECOND. So we've got you at last. Well, it's good time.

ROLAND. But I protest—I am not——

*(*BEATRICE *laughs,* ROLAND *straightens up.)*

ROLAND. Proceed.

*(*BLOUNT *is watching the scene with interest and delight.)*

THE LEADER. Let's have a look at his face.

ROLAND. *(As they advance)* No, no.

BEATRICE. *(Flinging open the door)* Jerry—run.

*(*ROLAND, *with a squeal of panic terror, dashes out of the door, the men after him. The landlord sits in a chair and rocks with mirth. Enter* JERRY.*)*

BLOUNT. Ah, young sir. It's a noisy night for sleep.

JERRY. So I found it.

BLOUNT. There's trouble about. They've catched Jerry.

JERRY. No.

BLOUNT. Aye—leastways, they're catchin' him now.

(Enter the King's men, leading ROLAND, *disheveled and unmasked.)*

THE LEADER. You don't run as well as you ride, my friend. *(The men release* ROLAND *and regard him, laughing.* THE LEADER, *turning to* JERRY*)* A good job well done, eh, my friend?

JERRY. A good job very well done, indeed. No one in England could have done it better. Of that I feel sure.

THE LEADER. There's many people in England will be glad to see that lad captured.

JERRY. I assure you I am not least among them. *(Suddenly)* Watch out. He is after a gun.

(The men turn and jump toward ROLAND. JERRY *and* BEATRICE *quietly vanish out the door, just before* TIM *enters, running and breathless.)*

TIM. Did you get—— Good! Hold on. Wot's all this? Juggins. He ain't no thief. He's Roland Harrington, the squire's son. Where's the other?

THE LEADER. What other? Isn't this the man you told us was here?

TIM. John—where's the other?

BLOUNT. What other?

TIM. The young man as come in a bit back.

*(*BLOUNT *suddenly bursts out laughing.)*

THE LEADER. What the devil's the joke?